

MAGDALENE AT THE SEPULCHER—AN INSTRUCTIVE SCENE NO. 2119

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“Then the disciples went away again unto their own home. But Mary stood without at the sepulcher weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulcher, and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She said unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.”
John 20:10-16.

I WANTED to speak tonight to believers who have lost the joyful presence of their Lord and who are saying, “Oh, that I knew where I might find him!” But when I thought of that matter, I said to myself, Many will be in the congregation who have never yet found Him, and therefore they will not have known His sweetness by experience, and yet they may be longing to find Him. Is it possible to benefit two classes at once?

“Well, well,” I said to myself, “I can speak to the saint, for she who figures in the text was Mary. But I can also, at the same time, talk to the sinner, for she was Magdalene, and that name has somehow become connected with penitent sinners.” I pray, at the beginning, that if there be one here who has long been a Mary, and has followed Christ lovingly—and if there is another here who is more like what is commonly, but erroneously, known as a Magdalene, both the Mary and the Magdalene may find direction and consolation in my discourse.

I shall have no other preface but these remarks. For we have before us a long text to be handled in a short time and I would not perform my task slightly. We will advance by a series of observations.

I. Our first observation shall be this—A SOUL SEEKING JESUS HAS WAYS OF ITS OWN.

Read carefully the tenth verse, “Then the disciples went away again unto their own home. *But Mary*,” Mary had her own way of proceeding. Mary was seeking Christ more intensely and affectionately than even the choicest of the apostles. They were more able to wait for events than her eagerness would allow her to do. John was able to go home, because he had seen and believed. Peter went home all the more readily because a cloud darkened his sky.

Mary was of another order from either of these—she loved and longed to see Him whom she loved. Whether He was dead or alive, she would find Him. When you are seeking the Lord, it brings out your individuality. Every truly anxious soul must seek the Lord in his own way. Each case is peculiar—each seeker feels himself to be one by himself. There are not two Mary Magdalenes, and Mary differs from John and Peter.

One part of her way was this—that *she would stay at the sepulcher after others had gone to their own home*. So have I seen the lover of the Lord lingering at the mercy seat when the prayers of others

were ended, and remaining in the use of the means of grace when others had enjoyed a full sufficiency of them. The meeting is very early in the morning, but Mary must be there. And if the meeting be at a distance, she trudges over the miles. One saint is noted for Bible reading and nothing will attract her from it. Another abounds in private prayer and is mighty on her knees. Another feels bound to go where Christ Jesus is earnestly talked about, and therefore he spends many an hour with the Lord's people.

Perhaps Peter and John had other necessary business to attend to and their duty called them away from the tomb, but Mary stood there still, hoping to hear something about her Lord, and at least, to know where they had laid His body. It is a blessed thing when the heart becomes so resolved to find Christ that it cannot be happy without Him, cannot even live without Him. When you are resolved to wait at the posts of wisdom's doors until the Incarnate Wisdom appears to you, you will not have to wait long.

Mary had ways of her own beside, for she stood there "weeping." I do not read that, upon this occasion, either Peter or John shed a single tear. They may have done so, but the Holy Spirit has not recorded the fact. Yet He has recorded it of this earnest seeker that she, "stood without at the sepulcher weeping." She wept as if her heart would break. Where was her Lord? What had they done with that sacred body? She had seen it wrapped in spices and fine linen, and laid in the tomb of Joseph—where was it now?

The tomb was evidently quite empty of all but the burial garments—where was the body? What new indignities had the cruel ones put upon it? That dear mangled body—to what malicious treatment was it now exposed? She stood, in deep emotion, sorrowing as love alone can sorrow when its beloved object is in peril.

It is a great thing, dear soul, when you cannot find Christ, to weep your eyes out till you can. When you cannot live without Him for very heartbreak, when all the joy of life is gone, when existence becomes only another name for grieving after an absent love—and that love the Lord Jesus. Then you are not far off from the happy hour of finding Him. Tears may be as the dew of the morning, the sure prophets of the rising sun. At any rate, many search for Jesus with tears in their eyes.

Mary did something more, which was according to her own mode of action—"she stooped down and looked into the sepulcher." They that would find Christ must stoop to look for Him. They must not merely wait for Him, but look for Him on their knees.

I have known some people pretend to wait for the Lord and they have kept up the pretense to their soul's ruin! They never looked to Him by faith. I have known some weep much, but they would not open their eyes to look to Jesus and be saved. True seekers look for Jesus in the Scriptures. They search for Him in the hearing of the Word. They cry after Him in their private room. This is well. If you would be saved, seek Jesus, and He will find you. Cry evermore, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him! I would come even to His seat."

No heart has ever earnestly looked after Jesus but what before long He has been seen. If there is this waiting, this weeping, this stooping, this looking—there will be an appearing in mercy and a recognition in joy. Mary, who looks for Jesus, shall see Him.

Note this peculiarity—that *she looked in the wrong place*. She looked into the sepulcher for the living and risen Jesus. Earnest, true-hearted, zealous, was Mary, but she labored under a mistake. Well might the angels say, "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen." Thus have I known true penitents seek the Lord where He cannot be found. They have expected to undergo a sort of inward purgatory, and they have sought for Jesus in their own feelings. He is not there. They have imagined that they must be carried away with despair before they might lay hold upon the Savior. Yet the Lord is not in the wind of feeling, nor in the fire of despair—His presence is known by His still small voice.

They have not looked with a simple, childlike trust to Jesus. But they have gone about to this, and that, and to other thing, and all in vain. They have sought for Jesus among forms, and ceremonies, but in vain. Possibly they have gone to human priests, or sages—these are as dead as the tombs. Priest-craft and philosophy are no places for the living Christ to be found in.

Yet I am glad that Mary looked into the tomb. For though she looked in the wrong place, it was a good thing to be looking for Jesus after any fashion. Better blunder in seeking Christ than be so wise as to go away from Him. I mean, better to be a sincere, but foolish, seeker after Jesus, and fall into a hundred errors of doctrine, than to be highly cultured and all the while to be looking to self, or to the world and forgetting the Lord Jesus. Poor seekers! You are in trouble, I see it by your tears. There is hope for you, for you have eyes and are looking out for something better than you can find in yourselves, or in your fellow men.

I am sure of you, for you will not run away to your home. You stay near the place where Jesus was last seen. You are not rolling-stones, but you abide in earnest hearing, in apostolic doctrine, and in prayers. Your constancy and your eagerness are cheering signs that grace is beginning its work in your hearts. Comfort is on the way to you, I can see the light of it reflected in those tears which glisten in your eyes. God grant that we may not be disappointed in you, for His name's sake!

II. But now, going a little further on, I would observe, secondly, that A SOUL SEEKING JESUS MAKES SMALL ACCOUNT OF ANYTHING ELSE.

Mary, when she looked down, saw the angels sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. At any other time, if Mary Magdalene had seen two angels, she would have been astounded, so as to lose her balance, through reverent fear. A vision of angels to a holy woman—there is something overpowering in it. A vision of angels, even to the ungodly soldiers that watched the grave of Christ, had made them faint and become as dead men.

But if you read the passage attentively, you will see that Mary talked to these angels as if they had been good men whom she had met before. She was not abashed by them. When they say to her, "Woman, why weepest thou?" she answers them, very plainly, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." She is not frightened at spirits and angels.

Neither is a soul that is in earnest after Christ to be put away from its search by any sort of diversion. The true inquirer would ask of angels, or of the most eminent saints, concerning the Lord Jesus. It will be only too glad to ask of anybody, or to answer a question from anybody, if it may thus hope to find Jesus.

Did you ever note the all-subduing power of a great desire? When God makes the heart tender and sets it longing after Jesus, it forgets its own feebleness and ceases to be alarmed by that which once distressed it. A longing soul would break through angels and through devils, through heaven and through earth to reach Jesus. We must have Him. We must behold the Well-beloved. Our soul is all on fire for Him, it cannot be restrained, it will burn its way to Him as the flame makes its way across the prairie. We want Jesus and we will not be content with anything short of Him.

Notice, too, as confirmatory of what I have said, that *when a soul is seeking Christ, nothing but Christ's own Word will satisfy it.* This holy woman was not content with what the angels said. Though they said to her, "Woman, why weepest thou?" those shining ones do not appear to have comforted her at all. She went on weeping. She told them why she wept, but she did not, therefore, cease her tears. And believe me, if the angels of heaven cannot content a heart which is seeking after Jesus, you may depend upon it that the angels of the churches cannot do so. We may preach as best we can, but the words of man will never satisfy the cravings of the heart.

The seeker needs Jesus—Jesus only—Jesus certainly. You read the best of books and heard the most faithful of testimonies when you were seeking, and yet you came away and cried, "Alas! I have not found Him. I have not found Him, and I cannot be content till I do so!" Beloved, never sit down short of Christ, for short of Christ is short of salvation. Whatever you hear, never be content with hearing—long to find Him of whom you hear.

However sweetly the story is told, the mere hearing of the truth must never be enough for you. You want for your salvation a personal Christ, to be heard by your own heart, and received by your own faith, and I entreat you, never rest until this is your happy possession. Find HIM—Him whom your soul loves—Him in whom alone your soul may trust. Let not voices from heaven, if you could hear them,

much less the voices of godly men and women on earth, ever content you, apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, who is all in all.

Furthermore, a soul *seeking Jesus is glad to confess Him*. It was awe-inspiring to behold angels arrayed in white. It was a rare boon for the Magdalene to gaze upon, those shining ones sitting in solemn state at the head and the foot of the spot where Jesus had once laid! But it did not so overpower Mary as to prevent her open acknowledgment of her Lord. When she spoke to Peter and John, in the second verse, she said, “They have taken away *the* Lord out of the sepulcher.” But when she addressed the angels, she said, “They have taken away *my* Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.”

It might not be necessary to say, “*my* Lord” to the two apostles, who knew exactly what she was, but she had not seen those angels before, and she would not let them go without their knowing that Jesus was her Lord, her very own, and so she puts it, “They have taken away *my* Lord.”

I like that amazingly. Are you a seeking saint? Whether you see Him or do not see Him, He is still yours, and you must hold to it that He is still your own. “My beloved is mine and I am his.” And if I do not just now behold the smile of His face, yet He is my Lord. I have given myself up to Him, and if He does not own me as His servant, I will still claim Him as my Master.

Come what may, if I walk in darkness, I will cleave to Him the more closely, for I will not wander from Him. Whither should I go? If all heaven does not shine upon me, I shall still look up that way. I have fallen into a fog and can scarcely see my way beyond my hand, but yet I am my Lord’s for all that, and I am not ashamed to declare it. “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” His I am and Him I serve. My ear has been bored to the doorpost, and I am His happy bondman forever. Come death, come life, come darkness of soul, or joy of spirit, whatever happens, I am my Lord’s. Such holy constancy will be rewarded.

In the true seeker, the one cry of the soul is Christ, none but Christ, Christ alone. Mary looks beyond all others. Angels may come and angels may go—but she neither seeks nor fears them. She blushes not to confess her Lord before the white-robed spirits, but she seeks *Him* and must find *Him*. O child of God, keep you to the one object of your search! O sinner, when once you feel your need of Jesus, bend all your desires towards Him and seek Him alone! If all your search is after Jesus, you shall find Him. Let not a heaven of angels suffice to take you off from searching for your Lord and His salvation.

O child of God, when you have lost the light of your Lord’s face, feel that you must have it back again, or die in the dark, and when you thus feel, He will return to you. He never set a soul longing for Himself, and Himself only, without gratifying the longing which He had created. Hunger and thirst after the Lord Jesus are blessed, for He who created them will satisfy them. Oh, that the Lord would cause us to faint and pine after Himself more and more, and then visit us with that which is our soul’s only fullness, namely, His precious, priceless self!

III. Thus have we handled the second point sufficiently. Let us now make a third observation—A SOUL SEEKING JESUS MAY HAVE HIM VERY NEAR, AND NOT KNOW IT.

Read, “When she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.” He was behind her while she stood looking into the sepulcher, and though she did not perceive it, *His Presence operated upon her*. She had been speaking to the angels and answering their question, and suddenly she was conscious that someone was standing just behind her. How came she thus to feel? Some think that, as Mark describes the angels as standing up, the Lord had, at that moment, come behind Mary and the holy angels, perceiving their Lord, rose up to do Him honor.

They had been sitting in contemplation at the place of His sepulcher, but as soon as they caught sight of their Lord, they stood up, as if to do His bidding. From their movements Mary concluded that someone was passing behind her. It may have been so, for assuredly the angelic guards would have paid Him instant reverence. But on the other hand, *rising* is scarcely so much a method of saluting a superior in the East as it is in the West. Let us suggest something else.

You have been sitting at your table, writing, and a friend has come behind you with noiseless tread, but yet all of a sudden you have been aware of a presence. Before you had heard or seen, you were

impressed—what if I say overshadowed? Was it not so with Mary Magdalene and the Savior? I am not superstitious if I assert that something very similar happens to me when Jesus is near. Many a believer will tell you that he has at times, when he has been in prayer, or hearing the Word, or meditating, felt as if he could be sure that the Lord stood near him.

There could, of course, be no palpable impression upon the flesh. For now, after the flesh, we know Him no more, but yet His presence has impressed our souls. There are influences of mind on mind which are beyond the recognition of science. The great spirit of our Lord has means of making itself spiritually known to our spirits—means which flesh and blood know nothing of, and which lips could not describe. I have discerned the special presence of my Lord with me by a consciousness as sure as that by which I know that I live. Jesus has been as real to me, at my side in this pulpit, as though I had beheld Him with my eyes.

I appeal to the experience of many of you. Have you not been moved by a mysterious influence which has overawed, inspired, and impressed you beyond description? A divine, majestic, delightful, and hallowing presence has been near you, and you have turned to look at a something which was so distinct that you would not have been surprised had it been visible to you. Mary did not discover at first that it was the Lord, but she felt His powerful influence, and then, “she turned herself back and saw Jesus.”

The next thing to be noted was that she saw Jesus standing. The word is better rendered “beholdeth,” as in the Revised Version. It does not merely mean that she saw Him, but *His presence fixed her gaze*. She steadily observed Him. She could not take her eyes off Him. She beheld Him intently. For she seemed to say, “I must have seen that face before. Can it be He? It is wonderfully like, but the thought cannot be entertained.” But she stood, and beheld Jesus with steadfast gaze.

Thus would we hold our meditations fixed upon His person. This may be so, and yet we may not know that the Lord is with us, though we are conscious of more than human company. In the case of a seeking sinner, Jesus has really come to him and has been comforting him, and yet he did not know that it was Jesus, but dreamed that He was far away. His soul felt so tender, so melted, so ready to yield, so near to God, that he was sure some holy power was ruling him. But he knew not that it was Jesus.

Occasionally, you and I have known such secret touches of heart and conscience, with bright hope and burning love, that we have wondered at ourselves, and yet we have not dared to believe that it was the Lord Himself who was thus at work upon us. And yet it was even so. We were looking for Jesus by His own light. Our hearts burned, and yet we did not perceive whence came the fire. Jesus may be very near, and yet we may fear that He has gone from us in anger.

What was it, do you think, that prevented her seeing and knowing her Lord? Shall we say that *her unbelief and sorrow dimmed her eyes*? Was it that, like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, her eyes were holden? Very possibly. Was it her tears that blinded her to the divine vision? Not so likely, for tears full often cleanse the spiritual vision. Weeping for an absent Christ has often made us quit a sin which aforetime had prevented fellowship with Jesus. What was it, then? I think it was that the sight was not what she expected. She was longing to see Jesus, but may be she only hoped to see Him wrapped in grave clothes, and so, you notice, that the evangelist puts it, “She saw Jesus *standing* and knew not that it was Jesus.”

If she had seen Him lying down, with the image of death upon His face, she would have known Him, but to see Jesus *standing* was far more than she could have hoped for. She had seen His lifeless body taken down by Joseph and Nicodemus, and she had helped to wrap Him in spices and fine linen. But to see Him standing, alive, was more than she could have dreamed of. The rapture was too great for her to expect or believe, and we marvel not that it is written “she knew not that it was Jesus.”

Beloved, our conceptions of our Lord are so poor and low, that if He were to come to us in even a moderate degree of His glory, we should fail to apprehend that it was really He. John knew Him, he had laid his head on His bosom, but he says, “When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.” So overpoweringly beyond all that John could have expected, was the vision of the Lord in His glory. It is true the Lord

Jesus did not manifest Himself in that manner to Mary, but still, the particular posture of standing was beyond what she looked for, and therefore He was not perceived.

It may be that the Lord Jesus is truly appearing to some sinner here, but as the appearance is not what he expected, he is unable to hope that it is his Savior. You are told simply to trust Him. And this is hardly what you looked for—you thought that you would suffer an experience of amazing sorrow. You looked for an affair which could be put into a biography. Tell me, did you not? But you will not have anything of the sort. You hear a voice which cries, “Only trust Him, only trust Him.” Obey that voice and enter into immediate rest.

You thought that you would be driven to the verge of madness, and then be relieved with a joy which would make you dance, but instead thereof, you are led quietly to trust. So long as you are truly saved, what does it matter? The Lord Jesus is present wherever there is humble faith in Him, for that plant never grows except where He sets His pierced foot. Believe and then know that it is Jesus.

And you, dear brother, who have lost the presence of Christ a while, perhaps you expect Him to come tonight and carry you away in a sacred transport. Instead of which, it may be He will calm you and fill you with repose, or He may even rebuke you and send you out to work and suffer for Him. May you have the discernment, however your Lord may come, to know that it is the Lord! Though He comes not in the way in which you looked for Him, yet be not so blind as to mistake Him for another. Yet if you should even think that your risen Lord is the gardener, you might not be so very wrong. If, under that misapprehension, you should ask Him to dress the garden of your heart, and pluck up your weeds, and water your plants, it would be well with you. Still, He may be near you and yet you may not know Him. Take comfort from this fact. And though you mourn your own dullness of apprehension, do not utterly condemn yourself.

Under her misapprehension, Mary *did not catch the tone of our Lord's voice* when He asked her why she wept. Our Lord quoted the question of the angel, as if to show that He would gladly support the word which His servant had spoken. Happy messenger, whose words can be repeated by his Master! But yet Mary's ear was heavy and she perceived not her Lord.

Ah me! we also may be in such a state that we do not discern the blessed Lover of our souls, though He speaks in the language of consolation! We would have ventured to predict that never would Mary Magdalene have forgotten that dear voice, but she did so, and what wonder if we do the same?

In a word, she was so far from discovering her Lord that *she took Him to be her foe rather than her Friend*. She imagined that the gardener had borne the body away. Was he so unwilling to have a corpse within the region of his gardening that he had put it in a corner, that no one might perceive it? She humbles herself to him and offers to carry away the form to which she feared he had such an objection. “Tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.” He to whom she spoke had not taken away her treasure—He had brought it to her—yes, He was Himself that treasure!

Beloved, you and I also have reckoned our best friend to be our enemy—so foolish are we and so soon mistaken. In the darkness of our souls we judge unrighteously and complain of our Lord whom alone we ought to praise. He knows our ignorance and He forgives.

IV. Upon my fourth observation I will be very brief—A SOUL SEEKING JESUS WILL DO ANYTHING TO FIND HIM.

Mary Magdalene was still seeking, and when she saw one standing before her, whom she thought to be the gardener, what did she do? Why, she inquired of that gardener where she might find Him whom she loved. *She was willing to learn from anyone*. If you are in earnest to find the Lord Jesus, you will not be particular about where you go, or of whom you learn. No matter whether the preacher is a doctor of divinity or a converted coal heaver, so long as he preaches Christ, you will be glad to learn from him.

She supposed him to be the gardener, but yet she said to him, “Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him.” Many have been happy to learn of Jesus from fishermen and cobblers. Does my friend object to my hearing an illiterate man? Ah, sir! when I am seeking eternal salvation, I

care little about the philosopher—I want the experiential Christian. For him I feel a deep respect, and even if I know him to be only a gardener, I speak to him reverently as, “Sir.”

When a man is not truly seeking the Lord, he wants short sermons, and these of a high literary order, or else adorned with attractive rhetoric. But when he is, with his whole heart, seeking for the Savior, he is not so concerned about polite phrases and ecclesiastical correctness. He looks eagerly for a practical direction how he may come to Jesus, and he will take that from any man or woman, be their station what it may. Let him be a chimneysweep, if he will lead me to Jesus, I will follow.

So it was with this holy woman. She desired to find the Lord and she was altogether absorbed in that one pursuit. She speaks as if everybody was equally intent upon the one theme. For instead of mentioning the name Jesus, she says, “If thou hast borne him hence.” Why, Mary, what are you talking about? “About *Him*,” says she. But who is this of whom you speak? Ah, friends! to her there was but one “him” in all the world, just then! Oh, to be thus absorbed!

Such was the desire of Magdalene to find the Lord Jesus, that *she feared no ghastly sight*. Let her know where the body is laid and she will be there. That body, which had bled so much from its five wounds, must have been a heart-breaking sight to a tender-hearted woman, but she is not dismayed. Let the body be how it may, it is the flesh and blood of her dear Lord and she must pay it homage. Wounds or no wounds, she would behold it. A wounded Christ is altogether lovely in the eyes of His redeemed.

His blood, flowing for me, clothes Him with a royal crimson robe in my eyes. I fear nothing, so long as I may but come to *Him*. Dear hearts, if you long for salvation, you will not find fault with those who preach the doctrine of the cross, the wounds, the blood! You will not kick at the doctrine of a crucified Savior, your Substitute condemned at the bar of justice. You want Jesus who died. You must behold Him for yourself by faith and no ridicule of the vain, or sneer of the proud, or cavil of the doubting, can make Him uncomely in your eyes.

Notice that *she dreads no heavy burden*. She says, “I will take him away.” Why, Mary, you could not bear away so great a load! You would fall beneath the weight of a man’s corpse! You are not strong enough for the sad task! Ah! but she thought that she could bear the blessed burden and she meant to try! She would have accomplished it. Faith laughs at impossibility and cries, “It shall be done.” But love actually performs the deed. A heart that is burning with love has about it a seven-fold energy, whose capacity it would be hard to calculate.

It would seem a grim and terrible task for a woman, at early morning, to be carrying from its grave the corpse of one who had been hanged upon a tree. But she offers herself for the deed and is even eager for it. To a soul that would gladly find Christ, nothing is too hot or too heavy, nothing is too cold or too sickening. We would do anything, refuse nothing, and suffer everything, if we might but clasp Him in our arms, our Jesus and our all.

Yet was she wedded to her old mistake—she continued to seek the living among the dead, for *she looked again into the sepulcher*. Thus have I seen seeking souls cling to their original mistake and follow up those erroneous but natural hopes which are surely doomed to disappointment. How do I know that Mary began to look again into that sepulcher? Observe that, in the sixteenth verse we read, “She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni!”

That is the second time she turned herself. The first time she turned and looked at Jesus, whom she supposed to be the gardener. Now, if she had to turn again to see Him, she must, in the meanwhile, have faced in the old direction, and must, therefore, have been peering again into the empty tomb. That is the difficulty which we have with poor seekers when they are in their fits. We persuade them from looking to themselves and their feelings, but they are soon back again at that unprofitable work. We tell them, “He is not here, for he is risen. Look not to your own dead self, with its feelings and resolvings, for Jesus is not there.”

For a while they listen to us and try to look to the Lord, but they do not know Him, and so their eyes insensibly return to the old place, looking again into the sepulcher of self, to find a living hope in the things of death. Still, even this mistaken persistency shows how anxious they are, and how desperately

they are set upon finding salvation. Though they make serious mistakes, and even repeat them, yet they cannot give over, for nothing short of Christ will content them.

V. And that brings us to our fifth point—A SEEKING SOUL MAY FIND JESUS THROUGH ONE WORD.

We might be wise to clip our sermons down and make them much shorter. Long discourses have often missed the mark, but our Lord's one word gave Mary all she sought. He said to her, "Mary." And at once she knew Him and cried, "Rabboni." Only one word! Jesus can preach a perfect sermon in one word. O dear friends, when you cannot say much to an anxious inquirer, say a single word. Who knows what that one word may do? When you cannot repeat a sermon, quote a verse. "A verse may hit him whom a sermon flies." Do not think that strength lies in length—it is often the reverse.

Though Mary came to herself by one word, *that one word was from Jesus Himself*. He and the angels together had not comforted her with a sentence, but one word from His heart went to her heart. That one word of love from His lip, "Mary," brought that other word of reverence from her lip, "Rabboni."

Dear friends, beseech the Lord to speak in His own all-powerful way at this time. In the meeting for prayer, you prayed for me that I might speak and I hope the Lord heard you. But now go yet further and cry, "Speak, *Lord!* Speak Yourself! The angel of the church has spoken and You have sealed his message, but now, we entreat You, go further and do You speak one word Yourself, by Your own Spirit!"

That one word was the Magdalene's own name. It was as though He had said, "I have called thee by thy name: thou art mine." Words, when they are spoken with a general bearing, may prove feeble. When the angel said, "Woman," and Jesus himself said, "Woman," that name belonged to a large class of individuals, and Mary did not take it to herself. But when our Lord said, "Mary," there was but one Mary present, and therefore it came home to her without fail.

This is what is needed—an assured, personal application of the Word. This our Lord grants when the message comes right home to you, as if you were the only one present—the preacher looks at you, speaks to you, and gives such personal details, that you are sure that not the preacher, but the preacher's God, is speaking to you. Then it is that you find the Lord and know of a surety that it is He.

That word from the Master's lips, that word your own name, *that word shall wake the echoes of your heart* by arousing happy memories and recalling hours of sweet delight. When a soul knows that Jesus knows its name, it soon begins to know Jesus for itself. Who but He could have said, "Mary" with that emphatic accent, with that peculiar intonation? Who but He could have brought all her life to remembrance, not so much by the word itself as by the meaning which He threw into it, and the vivid flash of His eye which went with it?

One glance of His eyes darted the light of God into her spirit. "Mary!" was the Open Sesame of her heart and mind. Oh, now she has Him! Lord, speak in this fashion to some seeker who is here looking for You! Lord, speak to John and Peter, to Jane and Sarah! Let the message come to many hearers from Your own lips, to Your own glory!

VI. The last head is this—A SEEKING SOUL WILL RESPOND WITH REVERENCE TO THE WORD OF JESUS.

Mary said at once, "Rabboni." This is a Hebrew word, signifying "Master," or as Parkhurst says, having a Chaldee particle within it, which makes it to mean "My Master," or as I have heard some say, "Great Master." At any rate, she meant that *He was her Lord and Teacher*. He knew her heart, He understood her inmost soul, and therefore she acknowledged Him Lord. He had called her by her name and she owned that all-controlling voice. He was her Master, since He could so divinely know and move her heart.

Even thus may we each one say, "My God, my Savior, convinced by Your knowledge of me and overpowered by Your condescension towards me, I feel that You have the sole right to my love, my trust, my obedience! You are within and about me, nearer to me than hands and feet, nearer to me than

even the blood that flows from my heart. And therefore I joyfully submit my whole being to You, to be ruled and instructed by You as my sole Lord and Rabbi!"

In addition to this, *she feels that she knows Him*. He is no stranger to her. Had He been a stranger, He might have said, "Mary," many times, but because He was the Good Shepherd that knows His sheep and calls them by name, therefore Mary, as one of His sheep, responded to His call. Mary knew Him—do you know the Master? Beloved, do you know the Lord Jesus? To know Him is life eternal! Have you this life? Not to know Him is an ignorance dark as death.

I do not say, do you know *about* Him? But do you know *HIM*? Has the Lord ever spoken to you? Has He ever worded it with you? Has he spoken one almighty syllable which has thrilled your very soul? If so, you will at once take Him to be your Teacher and yield your intellect to His instruction. Henceforth you will only want to know what He chooses to reveal, but what He reveals will satisfy your reason at once.

Henceforth opposing philosophies will go to the wind and you will learn of Him. Henceforth your own thoughts and speculations will seem as the chaff of the threshing floor, compared with the words which He teaches, which are full of weight and divine authority, even of light and power eternal. Tonight, from my very heart, I call Jesus, "Rabboni." I will have no Rabbi but Christ—no Master but my Lord Jesus. By all His knowledge of me and all His revelation of Himself to me, I take Him to be to me my Teacher and Lord.

"Rabboni" means also "*Master*" by way of authority. Mary confessed herself the follower of Jesus. Where He led the way, she was resolved to follow, even as our hymn puts it—

*"I am Thine and Thine alone,
This I gladly, fully own;
And in all my works and ways,
Only now would seek Thy praise."*

From that time, even if it had not been so with her before, Mary Magdalene was one of those of whom it could be said, "They follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."

Happy man and happy woman, who will keep close to every footstep of the Lord. If you are seeking Him at this hour, pray that, at this moment, He may speak the revealing word, so that you may henceforth feel that a change has come over you, the like of which you have never known. May you experience a sacred twist which shall affect your whole character! May Jesus touch your heart so that your whole body, soul, and spirit shall never forget that touch in time or in eternity! Amen.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

I hope my readers may have as much enjoyment in reading this sermon, as fell to my lot when preaching and revising it. At this present time I have lost my voice, but I feel especially thankful that this unusual inconvenience has happened to me only when it does not hinder me in the Lord's work. Still, I would beg the prayers of my loving readers, that I may soon be able to speak, so as to be heard in the great congregation.

I take this opportunity, on this sermon for the Sunday before Christmas, to send my sincere Christian salutations to all, in every place, who read this discourse. The God of all grace bless you and your household with the mercies which come of our Lord's first advent and with a happy expectation of the high privileges which await believers at His second and more glorious appearing!

C. H. S.
Mentone, December 14, 1889

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 20:1-18**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—785, 809, 766**

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.